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Drug abuse is an increasingly common problem that must be faced by the school and community. Since counselors have a great deal of responsibility in working with students who abuse drugs, more effective ways of handling this problem need to be considered by them. The first part of this paper is concerned with a plan for working with the secondary school student who has been "busted." The six roles and functions of counselors organized by Dr. Harold Richardson have been redefined specifically for counselors with the above problem. Practical suggestions are included with each role discussion. The second part of this paper presents a new approach to dealing with drug abuse. A written contract, signed by student and parents would set up a "Plan for Therapy" for both student and parent. Specific methods for carrying out the contract are included, as well as alternatives if the contract is broken. This plan has the salutory effect of combining joint responsibility of parents, community, school, and student in a positive approach with more realistic therapeutic results than present plans. (SJ)

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DRUG ABUSE--A SCHOOL DISASTER AND A PROBLEM FOR GUIDANCE*

by

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For those of us who read the newspapers, magazines and watch television, there is little need to emphasize to guidance personnel or school counselors that school districts in every part of this nation, including Alaska, are face to face with a "Drug Abuse Epidemic". The alarming and unabating increase in teen and sub-teen use of dangerous substances, drugs, narcotics and hallucinogens has filtered down to the third grade in some instances, while drug knowledge and lingo is expressed unabashedly by youngsters in both the kindergarten and first grades. Unfortunately, we have evidence of where misguided adults have even sought to "expand" the minds of their own two and three year olds by deliberately turning them on with L.S.D. and other hallucinogens. Many of you will recall the widely publicized account last year of a "learned" university professor who had not only given his children "acid" but had left some laying around so that while he was absent one day the youngsters turned themselves on. Let me assure you these are not unusual situations.

During the course of the past year we have had occasion to discuss this disastrous problem--for such it is to school authorities and teachers, as well as to parents and community agencies--with public and private school students on every grade level, with their parents, church leaders, juvenile authorities and law enforcement officials. We have attended scores of seminars, workshops, and taken part

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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in at least a dozen panel discussions the result of which always has seemed to add up to the ultimate question, "What are the schools doing or going to do about this catastrophe?"[1]

There is no denying that schools are having a problem with drug abuse and drug abusers--both in school, and, because of specific laws, out of school abuse. In California state laws specifically mandate teaching the evils of drug misuse, and the State Assembly has set up in the State Department of Education a special study with the specific charge of developing a state recommended educational program against drug abuse for the public schools. Despite the oft heard comment by some still unconvinced educators that this is not a school problem, the plain truth is that it has been made one not just by law or directive but by disturbed and concerned parents and the upset community. It is much too late to either wait for the "thing" to "just dry up and blow away" or to deny that it is not "our problem".

Accepting it as "our" problem, however, fails to define "whose" problem in education it actually is. Of course, it is the problem of the members of Boards of Education, of Administrators--both district and those in individual schools--but the plain nitty-gritty of the matter is that these good ladies and gentlemen do not do the teaching or counseling with students. We do, and the purpose of this panel discussion today is to try and highlight for your consideration and active discussion the responsibility or, if you will, "our role" as guidance and counseling personnel in the handling of the drug abuse problem.

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[1]The problem is not confined to the public schools. The writer has frequently this past year had occasion to discuss the drug abuse situation with officials of private schools including the parochial institutions. Parents cannot "escape" the drug problem by transferring their children to private schools any longer. Almost without exception these schools are having to face up to the same problem!

In doing so, and at our chairman Dr. Demos' suggestion, I shall divide this presentation into two parts. First, a plan--already in use in some districts in California--for handling the student who has already been "busted" and for whom administrative action is pending. Secondly, I should like to present for your consideration a generalized outline of an entirely different approach to drug users embodying a different philosophy and approach than the first. It is only fair to state that this second plan has not been, as yet, refined or adopted--or even really discussed by my own administration or Board--but it is one which I intend to present to them for consideration during April.

In the first instance let us make these assumptions based on rather widespread practice in various parts of the country, particularly in California. Assume that a secondary student has been "busted"--revealed by the police, school administration, or parents--as a drug abuser. The Board policy calls for a thorough investigation, a faculty-administration recommendation for action, and the final decision of the Board to (a) expell, (b) suspend, (c) transfer to a segregated "Continuation School". For the moment let us not become involved in the controversial questions relative to such a policy, but for the purposes of this discussion assume that this is the framework in which the counselor must operate. What could be the most effective role he/she plays in these very usual circumstances?

Our survey indicates that the usual procedure is initiated by the principal or vice principal. Based upon his information he generally suspends the student pending a hearing at which the parents are present and, in our district at least, they may bring an attorney with them. While clearly pointing out that the investigation and hearings are not judicial in character, every effort must be made to afford the student "due process" and recognition of his personal rights.

It is at this point that the student's counselor should become a "key" figure in affording not only "due process", but in seeing that the administration and the special hearing committee ("Faculty-Administration Placement Committee" generally made up of an administrator, counselor, teachers and, in one instance, the Assistant District Superintendent) receives a detailed but comprehensive "picture" of the student as an individual--a citizen in the school community.

A competent counselor would now fulfill the role and functions so well outlined by Dr. Harold D. Richardson in his recently published "operations manual" entitled Developmental Counseling in Secondary Schools. You will recall that Dr. Richardson specifies these as (a) the Individual Appraisal Function, (b) the Information Function, (c) the Counseling Function, (d) the Consulting Function, (e) the Follow-up Function, and, lastly, (f) the Evaluation and Research Function. In what follows I am taking some liberty in redefining these as they might relate specifically to the Counselor and drug abuse.

Ideally, as soon as the school administrator (principal or vice principal) is informed of the positive involvement of a student with dangerous substances, narcotics, or drugs, he would promptly notify that student's counselor (along with parents--and, if Board policy dictates, the authorities). It would then become the counselor's function to look into the source and degree of the charge. (1) What is the evidence? Was the student actually caught using, holding, pushing, in company with others using but not actually doing so himself? Is the source of the information reliable? Is the "evidence" positive? (We have seen instances in which the authorities were in error and it is possible for others to be mis-

taken!)[2] (2) The counselor, following a preauthorized routine thoroughly clear to all concerned and always in writing, would then arrange for a prompt hearing (within 24 hours, if possible), by contacting the youth's parents and informing them of the precise time and place. A sincere attempt should be made to accomodate the time to the parent's situation. There is going to be enough "heat", and the counselor will do well to keep it "cool" from the very outset. Simultaneously a confirmatory registered or certified letter formally stating reason, time, and place of the hearing should be mailed to the parent. ("Due process" again!)

(3) Implementing his "informational" and "appraisal" functions the counselor would undertake an objective in-depth investigation of the student's academic and behavioral record. This he would do by his personal review of the student's "cum file", noting down pertinent facts shown in that record, interviewing teachers who have, and who have had, the student in class, referring to the health record, seeking information concerning extra-curricular activities in which the student may have been engaged, and identifying any problem areas--academic or behavioral--which might shed light on this particular student's risk-taking or aberrant behavior. Frequently information regarding specific peer group attachments (or the lack of it in instances of "loners") will have significance. The Counselor should interview the student and in his discussion seek information which can explain or shed light on his school, family or personal problems and drug involvement.

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[2]It is not the intent here that the counselor would become an investigator or detective in the police sense, but an "educational researcher"--one who wants the facts and an understanding of the background and all pertinent circumstances, not opinions, educated guesses or even strong suspicions. We recognize that the role of the counselor here is a difficult one--indeed we may in fact be discussing a new breed of counselors--but the intent is to differentiate between the function and the purpose from that which would be the case were this placed in the hands of the "decision makers"--the administrators. Ultimately, of course, the administrator would receive the results plus the rationale of the counselor. It is hoped that this would make the actual decision making more effective and valid.

(4) Armed with such pertinent information as he has been able to assemble the counselor would now prepare a summary of the record and his investigations for presentation to the investigating committee. He may include his own impressions and possibly his own recommendations along with the documentation. It would not be unusual for him to turn up circumstances and situations previously not reported that will help the student. Circumstances have been found wherein the purported involvement was simply erroneous, unsubstantiated by "hard" facts, or beyond the accused student's control. In any case the appraisal, information, counseling and consulting functions would be used by the counselor objectively--to provide not just the bare truth, but understanding and help for the youngster where justified.

There is a sincere difference of opinion (and rightly so) as to whether the student's counselor should be a voting member of the faculty-administrative committee and take an active role in the student's hearing before the committee. Some thoughtful counselors feel that to do either could compromise their future counseling with the student (who might now see him as a part of the prosecution process, or the "establishment".) Another objection might be that it could embarrass future counselor-parent relationships for the same reason. Indeed, there is merit in both of these objections but there exists also an equally concerned group of counselors who feel that since they had researched the case, they should have a voice (or a vote) in the discussions and recommendation of the committee. (It should be carefully noted that this is a "recommendation" and that the final decision-making is left where it belongs, in the hands of the of the administrators, the superintendent and the Board of Education.) Generally, the committee can recommend to the superintendent and the Board (a) returning the student to class because of circumstances or a lack of proof of direct drug involvement, (b) transfer to a continuation school, (c) suspension or (d) expulsion. Under the California Educational Code, the Board

makes its decisions irrespective of legal actions that may still be pending or which have already been taken by the police or the courts.

Our concerned counselor, however, has not completed his role even though the student has been segregated, suspended or expelled. In most areas the student after a short period or at the end of a semester or school year can petition the Board to return to regular school. (In some instances--such as in our district--on the recommendation of the continuation school principal and teachers, or the superintendent, this time may be shortened or lengthened by specific board action.) In any event the counselor will again take an active role in meeting and counseling regularly with the "returnee" as well as continuing this function while the student is in continuation school. During both of these periods the function of the counselor is of primary importance; indeed, the future of the student may actually depend upon how well the counselor fulfills his role.

May I now turn to the second phase of this presentation, a suggested plan for meeting the problem of the drug user through a decidedly different "educational" approach. It should be remembered that this is a purely schematic presentation designed to seek your assistance in finding a better approach to the school age drug abuser than those now in vogue. (To our knowledge the plan in the form now presented to you is not yet in use anywhere.)

] A "CONTRACT" APPROACH TO TEENAGE DRUG ABUSE [

The need for finding a "new" approach to the teen and sub-teenage drug user and abuser is greater today after three years of increasing youth involvement with dangerous substances, drugs and hallucinogens than at any time in history. While recognizing that the ultimate--if such there ever be--cure for the problem lies in a dynamic approach to drug misuse prevention through a combined operation involving

parents, community, school and church and government, something much more effective than present methods must be found to help the great number of students already involved with drugs. This is an imperative; it cannot be further delayed without society being prepared to accept a drug-oriented generation with all that would entail for all concerned. The following "plan" is not a cure-all; it but suggests a start which, with initiative and foresight might be improved and altered until a much better plan has evolved. But it--or something akin to it--must be started now!

It is recommended to the Board of Education that, as an experimental alternative to our present segregation and penal approach, a broadened guidance program be adopted which will directly involve school counselors, administrators and effective volunteer teachers in a remedial as well as a preventative approach--not just to the "drug problem" but to its underlying causes. Recognizing that the schools can only do a small part of the two tasks of preventing drug abuse and providing effective therapy for those already involved, the plan envisions the active participation of parents as well as the direct involvement of the community.

Shorn of the details of operation in order that its outline can be briefly stated this, then, is our suggestion:** In lieu of segregating those students identified as involved directly or indirectly with dangerous substances and drugs and popping them into continuation school as well as involving them with police, probation and juvenile authorities, we are recommending that the Board consider a one-year test of the following:

(1) When a student has been identified as a user he and his parents shall be offered an alternative to present continuation school programs. This would be a <u>joint contract</u> under which the student and his/her parents would agree to a

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** A detailed operations design will be supplied upon request.

"Plan of Therapy" during which the student would receive individual evaluation initially with the determination as to his suitability for group therapy.

(2) At the same time his parent(s) must agree to regular weekly attendance on the same day or evening as their son or daughter at a mixed group session composed of both parents and teenagers. For obvious reasons no student would be in the same group as his or her parents.

(3) The duration of attendance of the parents and students "in therapy" would depend on several criteria, (a) measured attitudinal changes determined by the use of a number of instruments now being tested or in preparation; (b) evaluation of the student's behavioral patterns over a period of at least one full academic semester; (c) clear evidence of a determination by parents to adopt an ongoing program of effective communication and genuine understanding designed particularly to the needs of their own offspring.

(4) In this program the school counselor would play a very substantial role. We see him as directly involved in the individual as well as group counseling whether that program be set up as primarily within the school, or, as we would prefer, as a cooperative school-community venture purposely held outside or off the school premises.

(5) While this program would take full advantage of all agency and institutional experts as resource persons invited to participate in specific group discussions, primarily only competent guidance personnel would direct groups and do the actual counseling. These would include trained and experienced and well-screened school counselors, social workers, psychologists, sociologists, social anthropologists, ministers, priests and rabbis with specific training and ability, and other social and behavioral scientists and teachers.

(6) Each student would be assigned to a specific counselor whose initial task it would be to prepare a complete evaluation of the student and to lay out

a suggested plan of individual and group "therapy". The plan would then be reviewed by all the participating counselors at a special meeting called to consider and approve that specific plan for that specific student. After its approval by the counselors the participating psychologist-consultant would review the plan, approve it or suggest alternatives and return it to the assigned counselor for implementation.

(7) Now the counselor would meet with the student and his/her parents and complete the "contract". While retaining a signed copy, the counselor would file the original in the student's "cum" file, deliver a copy to parents and student, and send a copy to the office of the District Superintendent for informational use only.

(8) If the contract is breached by failure to attend weekly sessions either by the student or the parent, or by continued involvement with dangerous drugs or mind-altering substances, or continued association with persons known to be involved with the "drug culture", the counselor will promptly convene a board of evaluation made up of the other counselors in the program, plus a school administrator. This board shall consider the failure to perform under the contract and recommend, in writing, further or augmented therapy or that the Board suspend or expell the student or refer him/her to the appropriate juvenile or probation authorities as an "incorrigible".

(9) Upon certification by the appropriate counselor--based on counseling group evaluation--that the student had shown definite attitudinal and behavioral improvement, and, that his/her parents had completed satisfactorily their portion of the contract, the Superintendent would terminate the contract and return the student to full standing in school.

(10) If, as recommended, this program is set up by the school district and community jointly, the contract should include a flexible scale of fees to be paid

by the parent during the course of "therapy". This will have the dual purpose of (a) helping to support the program and make it possible to reimburse counselors and participants on a "reasonable fee" basis, and (b) make the "bite" felt so that both student and parent will place more value on the "therapy". "It is a fact that most people value little that which they get for nothing. If they have to pay for it they will value it more, and since it has a monetary 'bite' to it they are more likely to take positive steps to see that the costly experience is not repeated." (If held as part of school activities the plan probably could not be charged for as far as the student is concerned, but there could be a fee for the adults.)

(11) Coronado already has sufficient professional counselors and behavioral science specialists available to launch this program and the cost to the school district would be relatively small. (Details are available on costs if interest in the plan warrants.)

(12) This plan has the salutory effect of combining the joint responsibility of parents, community, school and the student in a positive approach to drug misuse with the possibility of a much more realistic therapeutic result than present methods.

It would be foolish, of course, not to recognize both the difficulties and limitations of the suggested program. It would also be remiss were we not to recognize in it the opportunity to get away from our present ineffectual program--ineffectual in attacking the drug problem. It is time to seek alternatives that have a potential for effectiveness by recognizing individual needs and differences. Perhaps this plan is not the answer, but it offers the opportunity to evolve from it more effective approaches designed specifically to help students rather than to just segregate and penalize them. It provides a way to keep the student in the central stream of education, not tossing him aside or relegating him to lesser educational opportunities.

It largely relieves the Board of Education and school administrators of hundreds of man hours of "due process" meetings, discussions, reviews and decisions which they now find not only burdensome, emotionally-charged, irritating, and unpleasant, but which also frequently leave them dissatisfied and dubious of the end result. It puts the problem of the immature student back where it belongs, in the hands of those who are trained and dedicated to educating him to solve his problems. It does this with a minimum of red tape, expense and stigma.***

*** This brief outline is now being reviewed and evaluated by a group of experts and will be revised in accordance with their recommendations.